



The Ansar of Yemen: The Huthis and al-Qaeda

By *Lucas Winter*

Journal Article | May 1 2013 - 2:30am

Introduction: The Transition from Saleh

Yemen's Tunisia-inspired "Arab Spring" began in late January 2011, when small groups of student protesters gathered outside the gates of Sana'a University in the country's capital. Attempts to disperse them failed, and the movement quickly spread to other parts of the country. By late February large protests were occurring throughout the country, from the port city of Aden in the restive south, to Taizz in the country's southwest, and Sa'dah in the far north.[\[1\]](#) On March 18 2011, following an especially bloody episode perpetrated by pro-regime snipers in Sana'a (the "Karama Massacre"[\[2\]](#)), several political and military elites defected from the regime, splitting Yemen's military and political class. Key political and security assets were either recalled to the capital or caught in the middle of the sudden politicization of state resources, providing an opening for local non-state actors to step in.

The key regime defector was Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar, then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh's longtime right-hand man and arguably the military's most important figure for several decades. Over the previous decade or so Ali Muhsin was believed to have become increasingly disgruntled with the Saleh family's centralization of military power at his expense and to have had a contentious relationship with Ali Ahmed Saleh, the former president's son and heir-apparent, who headed the powerful Republican Guard. The new Muhsin-led "rebel army" pledged to protect protesters from attack by Saleh loyalists. Several political and military leaders defected alongside Ali Muhsin.[\[3\]](#) Teaming up with prominent figures from the main opposition party, "Islah," including some of the al-Ahmar brothers[\[4\]](#) (no relation to Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar) and Abd al-Majid al-Zindani,[\[5\]](#) they now gave the mobilized and politically connected opposition enough men and weapons to stare down Saleh's forces. The capital Sana'a became politically and militarily divided between the two camps. At a national level, the sudden divisions within the military created an opportunity for non-state actors to replace the state as the main powerbroker in several Yemeni provinces. This paper focuses on how this process unfolded in the provinces of Sa'dah in the north and Abyan in the south.

In Sa'dah the province quickly fell into the hands of the "Ansar Allah," also known as the "Huthis." In Abyan the "Ansar al-Shari'a," a group of militants with ties to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), took over key towns from the government in the early summer of 2011 and held them for approximately one year. After giving some background on the two groups, the paper examines how each of them responded to the Arab Spring, how they have harnessed social media to their advantage, and what each group can tell us about the other.

Ansar Allah

The Huthi movement began as a network of educational centers for youth in the 1990s, centered in Yemen's northern province of Sa'dah and aimed at reawakening interest in Zaydi identity to

counterbalance the spread of Salafism in the region.[\[6\]](#) Zaydism is a strand of Shi'a Islam[\[7\]](#) endemic to Yemen that provided the religious underpinning for Yemen's rule by imams (Imamate). For almost one thousand years (with occasional periods of interregnum), Yemen was ruled by imams. In 1962, Egyptian-backed Yemeni army officers overthrew the newly installed imam, Muhammad al-Badr Hamid al-Din, whose father Ahmed had died only a week before. The deposed imam fled Sana'a and together with Royalist tribal fighters in Yemen's Zaydi north fended off Egyptian and Yemeni forces for the next five years. Fighting continued after Egypt's withdrawal in 1967, but by the end of the decade Republican forces and their tribal allies prevailed, and Zaydism and the northern provinces more generally lost their prior influence.

In the 1990s Salafi-Wahhabi ideas from Saudi Arabia began making incursions into Sa'dah Province and other parts of the Zaydi heartland. Puritanical and intolerant of other interpretations (Shi'a Islam in particular), Salafist preachers waged verbal attacks against Zaydi dogma; their fundamentalist interpretation of the Quran appealed to tribal groups and the lower tiers of northern Yemen's stratified society, who had for centuries been marginalized by the hierarchies of Zaydism.[\[8\]](#) These events, in combination with the new political openings provided by the 1990 unification of the northern Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the southern People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), would galvanize several prominent Zaydi scholars and activists. The result was educational centers meant to activate a new generation of Zaydis, which would become the "Shabab al-M'umin" (Believing Youth). Among the pivotal figures in this movement were Zaydi scholar Badr al-Din al-Huthi and several of his sons. By the end of the 1990s the Believing Youth had established branches throughout Sa'dah and parts of neighboring provinces. The group coalesced around the leadership of Badr al-Din's son, Husayn al-Huthi, a highly intelligent and charismatic leader whose sermons and lectures would come to define the group's ideology, in theory if not in practice.[\[9\]](#)

At the turn of the century the growing Shabab al-Mu'min network became increasingly confrontational. In the province of Sa'dah the group challenged state preachers and educators, and throughout the country al-Huthi's followers began testing government tolerance of free speech and association. Although the Huthis were initially seen by the Saleh government as a useful counterweight to the growth of Salafism, they progressively went from being less useful to becoming an overt nuisance. Tensions rose as the Huthi movement became increasingly confrontational in Sa'dah, publicly chanting their slogan despite government prohibitions on doing so and taking over government-run mosques and schools in Sa'dah in order to teach their particular brand of Zaydism.[\[10\]](#) The key shift in the calculus of both Husayn al-Huthi and the Yemeni government occurred in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, particularly the Second Palestinian Intifada and the Iraq War. Both events would embolden al-Huthi and his followers. Tensions spiraled out of control in the early summer of 2004; in September 2004 Husayn al-Huthi and several of his followers were killed by government forces.

Yet far from ending the movement, the armed confrontation and subsequent heavy-handedness of the Yemeni forces involved – commanded by Ali Muhsin – gave birth to a full-fledged insurgency that raged across Sa'dah and neighboring provinces. Husayn al-Huthi's young half-brother Abd al-Malik took charge of the movement, transforming it into an insurgent force ideologically unified by a deep reverence for the martyr Husayn al-Huthi. It was during this period, the six "Sa'dah Wars" (2004-2010), that the group began calling itself "Ansar Allah," although the media continued and continues to refer to the "Huthis." Only after direct Saudi Arabian military intervention in November 2009 was the group finally forced into accepting what proved to be a durable ceasefire, in February 2010.

Ansar al-Shari'a

The hitherto unknown Yemeni Ansar al-Shari'a burst into the international spotlight in late March 2011,

when they took over the town of Jaar in Abyan Province (approximately 15 kilometers northwest of the provincial capital Zinjibar) and renamed it the “Emirate of Waqar.” Perhaps owing to the varieties of fundamentalism in Yemen,[11] the group’s links to the ideologues and organizers-in-chief of AQAP-central[12] were initially unclear. It was subsequently established that the links are tight, with Ansar al-Shari'a now considered a mere alias for AQAP, “simply AQAP’s effort to rebrand itself.”[13] Rebranding efforts are worthy of close attention. When successful, they may require a revision of strategic thinking.

[14]

The roots of Yemen’s Ansar al-Shari'a can be traced back to the jihadi community that flourished in the 1980s, when Yemeni volunteers made their way – usually through semi-official channels – to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Yemenis were also well represented in the second generation of Afghan veterans of the 1990s, giving the global jihadism that developed around al-Qaeda in the 1990s a solid base of support in Yemen. Yemeni veterans of Afghanistan, several of them close associates of Osama bin Laden, launched attacks in the late 1990s and early 2000s, most notably against the *USS Cole* in October 2000. As in neighboring Saudi Arabia, the aftermath of 9/11 led to an uptick in jihadi activity that was met with a strong state response.[15] While AQAP based in Saudi Arabia, was destroyed, Yemen’s more modest “al-Qaeda in Yemen” crawled along, despite the fact that most prominent jihadi commanders were by 2006 either dead or imprisoned.[16]

Among the imprisoned were Nassir al-Wahayshi and Qassim al-Rayimi, two Yemeni associates of Osama bin Laden. On February 3, 2006 they, along with several other militants, escaped from a prison run by Yemen’s Political Security Organization (PSO). The two Yemenis would later be joined by Saudi nationals Saeed al-Shihri and Muhammad al-‘Awfi, and in January 2009 they released a video founding the current incarnation of AQAP, led by al-Wahayshi and with al-Rayimi as its military commander.[17] The group soon began carrying out attacks in Yemen and abroad, while building a base of followers and adherents in several parts of Yemen.[18] Indeed, shortly after its official founding AQAP went on the offensive, targeting well defined targets, including foreigners, energy infrastructure, and government forces; in 2010 the group began a concerted campaign against government and intelligence officials.[19]

The Arab Spring

The March 2011 split in the Yemeni regime raised fears that the country would collapse into civil war. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, led by Saudi Arabia, quickly moved in with a proposal in which Ali Abdullah Saleh and his allies would give up power in exchange for immunity. After several last-minute changes of heart and a bomb attack that nearly took his life, Saleh finally signed the agreement in November 2011, handing presidential power to his vice-president, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi. A one-man election held in February 2012 gave Hadi at least a semblance of popular legitimacy as the new president.

The relatively smooth transition was met with relief, given that Yemen has been considered “on the brink” for many years. Not all, however, were happy. Three groups in particular voiced opposition to the agreement, each for its own reasons. The first of these was the “revolutionary youth,” a group that had coalesced around the initial protests and mobilization against Saleh. Although it had become too diffuse to wield political power, it still remained alive as a moral compass of sorts for all else to invoke. The youth saw the new agreement as a mere reshuffling of cards at the top, rather than the genuine political reform they had hoped to achieve. The second group was represented by factions within the Southern Movement (Hirak) who felt that their cause of greater autonomy or independence from Sana'a was not served by the agreement. As with the students, the diversity of voices and programs within the movement greatly lessened their influence on the transition. The third group was northern Yemen’s Ansar Allah (the Huthis), who, after having gained control of Yemen’s northern Sa’dah Province in March 2011, were in no mood to relinquish it to a government that was becoming dominated by their longtime foes (the Islah party and

Ali Muhsin).[\[20\]](#)

A fourth disgruntled group, by far less numerous than the previous ones but commanding world-wide attention, also emerged following the Arab Spring; this was Ansar al-Shari'a, the armed group linked to AQAP. As the name suggests, their stated goal was establishing Shari'a rule. In March 2011 the group took over the town of Jaar (Abyan Province); taking advantage of clashes in Sana'a between loyalist security and gunmen loyal to Sadiq al-Ahmar in late May, the group overran the provincial capital Zinjibar.

Following is a closer look at the activities of the Ansar Allah (Huthis) and Ansar al-Shari'a (AQAP) during this important period of the Arab spring.

Ansar Allah

The nationwide anti-Saleh mobilization that began in Sana'a quickly picked up in areas of Huthi influence, including Sa'dah and parts of neighboring Amran Province. In al-Jawf Province, to the east of Sa'dah, security bases were overrun after government forces attempted to quell protests by force. In March the Saleh-appointed provincial governor and his entourage left Sa'dah and returned to the capital Sana'a; free to maneuver without central government interference, the Huthis soon chased off Saleh's key regional allies. Faris Man'a, an influential tribal figure and businessman from the region, was elected governor by an assembly of local leaders with Huthi approval. This political agreement, which remains in place and has brought relative stability to Sa'dah for the first time in nearly a decade, appears to be sustained by support from the Huthis, who remain the strongest single group in the province.

The Huthis spent the remainder of 2011 consolidating their position in Sa'dah Province. In December of that year clashes broke out with Salafists from the town of Dammaj, a few miles from Sa'dah city, spurred by sectarian provocations against the Huthis and allegedly over control of a vantage point overlooking the town and controlled by the Salafists. The fighting threatened to escalate, when the besieged Salafists called on fellow Sunnis from throughout Yemen to break the siege. With the Sunni Islah party having gained the upper hand in Yemeni politics and well armed Islah-affiliated tribes nearby, the potential for a sectarian showdown in Sa'dah loomed. Calm was eventually restored via tribal mediation.

Provinces at the edge of Huthi influence have been less stable.[\[21\]](#) To Sa'dah's east, Huthis have repeatedly clashed with Islah-backed local armed tribes in the province of al-Jawf. Southwest of Sa'dah, the impoverished province of Hajjah saw battles between Huthi backers and local Salafists in the first half of 2012. South of Sa'dah, Amran Province continues to be a tribal fault-line as it was in the 1960s between allies of the Egyptian-backed republican government and allies of the Saudi-backed deposed imam, roughly the Bakil and Hashid tribal confederations. The fault line, speaking broadly, is now between backers of the Huthis and of the al-Ahmar clan, which heads the Hashid tribal confederation.[\[22\]](#) Huthi critics accuse them of expansionism, in particular, a desire to take control of the Red Sea port of Midi in Hajjah Province, something they themselves deny. Whether the Huthis feel they have a "natural" sphere of influence or are acting with expansionist plans is, as will be noted later, an important question.

The Huthis have been able to capitalize on their control over Sa'dah Province by becoming a key player in the ongoing dialogue regarding Yemen's political future. The Huthis have sent mixed signals on their participation in the national dialogue, which is the centerpiece of the GCC-agreement that is to provide an inclusive roadmap for Yemen's future. This in itself is a change from their previous rejection of the agreement; it remains to be seen whether they are truly interested in engaging in politics.[\[23\]](#)

Ansar al-Shari'a

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Yemen's jihadis consisted mostly of small cells working independently to carry out attacks against strategic targets. Beginning in the summer of 2010, more sustained clashes between AQAP-affiliated groups and locals or government began breaking out in Abyan and Shabwa Provinces in former Southern Yemen.

Following the March 2011 splintering of the Yemeni state, parts of the country that had been contested, such as Sa'dah province, fell in the hands of non-state actors. For AQAP militants in Abyan, state retraction and the politicization of the armed forces provided an opening as it had for the Huthis in Sa'dah, although a more modest one.

The town of Jaar, in Abyan Province, had for years provided an outpost of jihadi sentiment a mere 30 kilometers from the provincial capital of Zinjibar, which was, in turn, a gateway to the port of Aden. Militants quickly overran Jaar in late March and renamed it the "Islamic Emirate of Waqar." Two months later they entered Zinjibar virtually unopposed. Security forces fled the city, and the one remaining army formation, 25th Mechanized Brigade, was confined to its base on the outskirts of Zinjibar, from which it shelled the city. The city was also attacked from the sky, and those residents that could fled. Through it all, Ansar al-Shari'a militants established themselves as the proud rulers of these half-destroyed and semi-abandoned towns, forcing their view of Shari'a on its residents.

In early 2012 references to a man by the name of Jalal Baleidi al-Marqashi (al-Murqashi), whose *nom de guerre* Hamza al-Zinjibari was a nod to his local roots, began appearing in videos, where he was referred to as the "emir" of Abyan. In February 2012 Ali Abdullah Saleh's former deputy, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi (himself a native of Abyan), formally took over the presidency after "winning" the one-man election, taking new steps to reunify the military. In May 2012 Yemen's armed forces, backed by armed "popular committees" made up of local tribesmen, began to recapture Jaar and Zinjibar in Abyan, as well as several towns in neighboring Shabwa Province (Shaqra and Azzan) that had also fallen in the hands of militants. In July the government announced that it had pushed AQ back from Abyan. The militants claim to have retreated and continue to put pressure on the government in several parts of the province.

Image: Media and Narrative, Social and Otherwise

Media and particularly the Internet have become key tools for both of these groups. The problem of access in peripheral regions such as Sa'dah and Abyan, along with the politicization of most Yemeni media, means the narrative in these areas is often up for grabs. The Huthis and AQAP both operate in peripheral areas, where illiteracy and poverty abound, in part due to state inattention or incapacity. These provinces are therefore fertile ground for fundamentalist groups like the Huthis and AQAP not only to win over the local residents but also to convince a broader audience that their legitimacy is superior to that of the government. Following is a summary of how the two groups have harnessed social media to their advantage.

Ansar Allah

The Huthis have been using new media platforms since the mid-2000s. Initially, their principal medium was the website almenpar.net (possibly an erroneous transliteration of the Arabic word "minbar," roughly Islam's equivalent of a pulpit).[\[24\]](#) In addition to video and audio of speeches both by the deceased Husayn al-Huthi and his younger brother, Abd al-Malik, the website published official statements, news reports and opinion pieces by Huthi officials and supporters. Given that the conflict between the Huthis and the Yemeni government was highly polarizing and often couched in sectarian terms that lent themselves to inflammatory accusations and heavy propagandizing, the availability of a medium from which to tell their perspective was of incalculable benefit to the Huthis.

Almenpar.net has given way to the more sophisticated, <http://ansaruallah.net/>. In addition to a variety of articles, opinion pieces and archived audiovisual materials, the site features a link to the group's *al-Haqqa* (The Truth) newspaper. The Huthi group is also active on social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter.^[25] Perhaps the most significant development in their media efforts came on March 23, 2012, when they launched a satellite TV channel called al-Masirah, which is carried on the Egyptian satellite NileSat, meaning it can be watched throughout the region.^[26] Among others, the channel combines news broadcasts, political talk shows and religious programming (with a Shi'a bent).

Generally speaking, the Huthi narrative rests on three main pillars. The first is based on a sense of both Islamic and Yemeni tradition, with Zaydism as the link between the two. Traditional Yemeni social structures, in particular the unique status of *sayyids*,^[27] are an important feature of this first pillar, as are the celebration of specifically Shi'a religious festivals, such as Eid al-Ghadir and Ashura, both of which for the Huthis have blossomed into occasions for mass gatherings and public speeches. The second pillar is based on international politics, specifically perceived plots by the United States and Israel to destroy the Huthis, take control of Yemen, and wage war against Islam.^[28] These tropes are not only repeated in Huthi official statements, but also constitute a basic part of the group's identity, as they are repeated in the Huthis slogan.^[29] The third and final pillar of Huthi rhetoric is one of resistance to injustice and tyranny. This general trope, which has a strong referent in Zaydi history, was used throughout the Huthi conflict with the government. Self-defense has been invoked in a mantra-like fashion by the Huthis. It is worth noting that on these last two points Huthi rhetoric is congruent with that of the "resistance axis," the current regional incarnation of which is associated with Hizbullah, Assad's Syria, Iran and Hamas, but which saw a different though similar manifestation in the 1950s Arab nationalism of Gamal Abdel Nasser.^[30]

Ansar al-Shari'a

The name "Ansar al-Shari'a" alone carries significant currency, given that, coincidentally or not, it has been adopted by several Salafi and Salafi-jihadi groups throughout the region, most prominently in Libya and Tunisia.^[31] Although AQAP's central leadership continues to dispatch suicide bombers, most recently killing nearly 100 soldiers at an army parade in May 2012 in Sana'a, one can expect its more docile Ansar al-Shari'a face to gain in prominence. Indeed, Yemen's transitional period has weakened the central state's security apparatus to a degree that is likely to make the battle for local support, rather than further degradation of state capacity, AQAP's priority. Its emissaries are young men sporting long hair and speaking didactically and in classical Arabic on the virtues of Shari'a law; the open dissemination of their activities indicates a new strategy that has fully embraced the potential of social media.

Al-Qaeda has always been Internet-savvy. Although the secretive AQAP leadership had not fully avoided the media spotlight,^[32] they have certainly been extremely cautious when doing so. Indeed AQAP leadership continues to follow al-Qaeda's model of using well defined channels to disseminate messages, whereby authenticity is verified by both a legitimate "production company"^[33] and reliable distribution channels.^[34] Ansar al-Shari'a's strategy has been different, beginning with its relationship with the media: not only has the group allowed Yemeni journalists to embed with them,^[35] but they have also invited foreign journalists to document the situation in Abyan.^[36] There is little mention of global jihad or sweeping historical statements in their rhetoric; rather, the focus is more parochial and on immediate needs in Yemen. When speaking of foreign powers, it is often in an immediate context such as the use of American drones. The group's message is straightforward and implied in its name: they seek to institute a society ruled by a strict and fundamentalist interpretation of Shari'a.

In October 2011 the group founded its own "Madad News Agency," through which it produces videos that are then posted to YouTube and other platforms.^[37] It also has its own Facebook page and Twitter

account.[\[38\]](#) Al-Madad's main production to date is a series of fifteen videos translated as "Eyes on the Event," which are available on YouTube.[\[39\]](#)

Comparative Analysis

The Arabic word "Ansar" is usually translated as "partisans" or "supporters." In its original context it referred to the residents of Medina (Yathrib) who hosted, supported and fought alongside the Prophet Muhammad following the *hijrah* from Mecca to Medina. The term served to distinguish the early Medina converts from the Prophet's Meccan companions. In the contemporary context it has been adopted by several militant groups, gaining particular traction since the Arab Spring. One of the major Islamist armed groups in northern Mali, for instance, calls itself "Ansar al-Din" (Partisans of Religion). It is the name "Ansar al-Shari'a," however, that has served as a focal point for a scattering of Sunni groups inspired by or sympathetic to a vision of society ruled by a simplistic and fundamentalist vision of Shari'a.[\[40\]](#)

In early 2011 AQAP's deputy leader Said al-Shihri declared a jihad against the Huthis. The announcement came nearly two months after back-to-back suicide attacks in Huthi-controlled parts of al-Jawf and Sa'dah killed several Huthi followers. Although the Huthis had for many years clashed with Salafi groups in al-Jawf, the use of suicide bombers seemed to link the attacks directly to AQAP. More recently, according to allegations by Ansar al-Shari'a leader in Abyan Jalal al-Marqashi, the Huthis were fighting alongside the military in Zinjibar. The proof, he claimed, was in documents found on several of those that had been killed; such allegations are of course difficult to verify, but if true would be indicative of a broader Huthi presence than otherwise believed, both in terms of geographical scope and presence within the security apparatus.[\[41\]](#)

The most obvious difference between the Huthis and AQAP is that the former are Shi'a and the latter are Sunni (see Table 1).[\[42\]](#) Despite these differences, the groups share more in common than one might think. As was noted earlier, the general Salafi doctrine that took root in northern Yemen is influenced by Saudi Arabia's militant Wahhabism, which is particularly hostile to the Shi'as. The influx of Salafism in the Zaydi heartland in the 1990s was accompanied by a rhetoric disparaging of the Zaydis and other Shi'as.[\[43\]](#)

The history of the Huthis, from their roots as the Believing Youth (Shabab al-Mu'min), can hardly be understood outside of their competition with Salafists for support from the disgruntled youth and tribal members of Yemen's periphery. It is no surprise, in this context, that Huthism is a fundamentalist form of Zaydi doctrine in many ways derivative of Salafism. Huthi Zaydism uses the Salafi referent of harkening to the lifetime of the prophet and complements it with a return to the fundamentals of Zaydism as espoused by the founder of contemporary Yemen over one thousand years ago.[\[44\]](#) There is a strong element of fundamentalism within the Huthi movement; hundreds of years of Zaydi jurisprudence and exegesis were cast aside in favor of a more basic interpretation of the Quran and its teachings for the present, something that worried mainstream Zaydi scholars.[\[45\]](#)

At the level of organization and goals, Lebanon's Hizbullah, on the one hand, and the Taliban in Afghanistan, on the other, represent useful reference points to understand the Huthis and Ansar al-Shari'a, possibly even a model for the groups to emulate. Roughly speaking, Hizbullah has become a group with tight control over a stable and demographically circumscribed territory. While the group's influence within its area of control is in many ways stronger than the state's, it is also involved in national politics and arguably plays an outsized role. Hizbullah has nurtured an effective media machine, centered on the TV Channel Al-Manar, through which its positions are justified within the broader discourse of resistance. Finally, Hizbullah retains a major weapons arsenal beyond state control and which is comparable, if not superior, to that of the state itself. All of these characteristics are, to different degrees, shared by the

Huthis.

The Taliban, in contrast, extended their control across Afghanistan by relying on a group of young men who had been indoctrinated into the group's ideology, in essence a basic vision of society ruled by a fundamentalist reading of Shari'a. These men would be called on to act brutally when necessary, but also honestly and with discipline. Shari'a courts were created to prosecute those who broke laws, and they were better functioning, more consistent and less corrupt than what preceded them. They would bring order to unruly places in exchange for the total submission of the citizenry. This model applies well to Ansar al-Shari'a and their brief stint as rulers of parts of Shabwa and Abyan.

These analogies raise an important question concerning future interactions between the two groups. Do the Huthis, as their detractors have claimed, hope to restore the imamate and rule over the whole of Yemen? Or are they content having their own enclave in Sa'dah Province, as they seem to indicate? Does AQAP, meanwhile, hope to do in Yemen what the Taliban did in Afghanistan? Or is their main focus the peripheral areas of former South Yemen? What, in short, does each group consider its natural sphere of influence?

Amidst their differences, the two groups converge in their disdain for foreign actors intervening in Yemeni affairs, particularly Saudi Arabia, the United States and Israel (and, in the case of AQAP, Iran). Opposition to Israel and United States is a key element to Huthi group identity. Unlike AQAP, however, the Huthis have not targeted American or other Western interests in Yemen. Nonetheless, and despite the growing animosity between the groups, the Huthis were publicly critical of the recent drone strike in Sa'dah province targeting AQAP operatives, seeing it as yet another example of American meddling in Yemen.[\[46\]](#)

As for AQAP, their agenda of global jihad is well known. Ansar al-Shari'a, however, appears focused on seizing and holding territory in Abyan province first, and subsequently getting foreign powers out of Yemeni affairs, rather than vice-versa.[\[47\]](#) Their intent could be to become an actual player in the struggle for control over Yemen rather than the source of destabilization and sabotage that they have heretofore represented.

The future of Yemen will be fiercely contested over the next several months and perhaps years, and both the Huthis and AQAP will seek a favorable result. Their improved position in Sa'dah province allows the Huthis to benefit from the status quo, making them unlikely to endorse major change. With their longtime foes Islah and Ali Muhsin having gained power, a more conservative Sunni discourse is taking hold and the Huthis will be loath to endorse any devolution of power to the center without safeguards for local autonomy. Even though Huthi popularity at a national level may be at its pinnacle, the group is likely to benefit more from negotiating for spoils than from playing electoral politics, with the institutionalization of greater autonomy at the local level a likely demand for the group. The idea of an institutionalized semi-independent Huthi territory, however, may be anathema for many parties in the region, chiefly Saudi Arabia. The more conspiratorial voices, or at least those allied with Islah, see the potential for Ali Abdullah Saleh to join forces with the Huthis and play "politics by force."[\[48\]](#) While not out of the question, this scenario would be difficult to confirm unless it actually happened. The strength and intentions of the Huthi movement remain, as they have since the group first gained international notoriety fending off the Saudi Arabian military in 2009, a mystery.

AQAP/Ansar al-Shari'a, on the other hand, exhibits no interest in playing politics and may be content focusing on building grassroots support before attempting to take and hold territory again. Lacking the prestige status that accompanies a *sayyid*-led movement, which has allowed the Huthis to act as mediators and forge unique and varied bonds with the tribes, Ansar al-Shari'a will have to work hard to forge close

ties with local tribes.^[49] AQAP's leader Nasir al-Wahayshi was Osama bin Laden's longtime personal secretary and is thought to be an effective organizer.^[50] Crucial to its success will be AQAP's ability to blur the line between itself and other strains of Sunni militancy operating in Yemen, as this can immediately give it an enormous pool of support, including groups led by influential figures such as Abdul Majid al-Zindani.^[51] Except under unique circumstances, such as those of the summer of 2011, AQAP may not have the capacity – shown by the Huthis in the 2000s – to seize and hold territory from the Yemeni state. Yet their success for now may depend more on whether or not local residents embrace that which AQAP represents as a preferable alternative to the modern Yemeni state. The idea of al-Qaeda is, indeed, more important than its physical manifestation.

The pressures on Yemen are centrifugal rather than centripetal, by which the power of the center is weakened to the benefit of poles of regional power. These centrifugal forces could make it difficult to recreate a central state that can reach across the country.^[52] Although effective mediation certainly played a role, the fact that the looming showdown over Sana'a never occurred may also be testament to these outwardly pushing forces. As this reconfiguration of power in Yemen continues to unfold, the role played by regionally based ideological groups such as Ansar Allah and Ansar al-Shari'a will be important in determining the success of the reconfigured Yemeni state.

TABLE 1

	Ansar Allah	Ansar al-Shari'a
Alias	The Huthis	AQAP
Denomination	Shi'a (Zaydi)	Sunni
Doctrine	Zaydi Revivalist	Salafi-Wahhabi
Potential Referent	Hizbullah (Lebanon)	Taliban (Afghanistan)
Sphere of Influence	Sa'dah Province and its environs	Abyan, Shabwa, and parts of other provinces
Stated political aims	Greater control over own affairs	State ruled by fundamentalist vision of Shari'a
Leadership (martyred) figure	Husayn al-Houthi	Osama bin Laden

Appendix

AL-MADAD VIDEOS

Ansar al-Shari'a's (AAS) "Al-Madad News Agency" has produced a series of fifteen videos titled "Eye on the Events." The origins of the footage are unclear. Following is a brief summary of each video.^[53]

NUMBER 1 (11:04) dated 12/11 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtrYxiG3tp0>)

The video begins with an interview of an individual in front of a truck of food aid that is being provided to citizens of Zinjibar by AAS members, followed by images of goods being distributed. It also shows AAS members providing electricity and fixing a dirt road damaged by flooding, as well as returning stolen vehicles and goods to their owners.

NUMBER 2 (3:21), dated 12/11 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2kL9me-qkA>)

The video consists of footage of the Sheraton Hotel in Sana'a and still shots of what are identified as

American soldiers in this area.

NUMBER 3 (8:28), dated 1/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fu2Ntj42cJU>)

The video focuses on the distribution of humanitarian aid by AAS for Abyan's refugees as well as AAS mediation of community disputes. It also includes interviews with storekeepers and others regarding security, law and order, and quality of life. All of them emphasize newfound security and absence of theft now that the corrupt police is gone. It also includes similar interviews for the town of Azzan, in Shabwa Province.

NUMBER 4 (17:29), dated 2/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ha5o19u5eY>)

The video begins with confessions of three separate detainees accused of spying, lasting a total of approximately 10 minutes. This is followed by the verdicts by the AAS tribunal, in which the three accused spies are given death sentences, one for working with Saudi intelligence and the other two for helping identify targets for drone strikes.

NUMBER 5 (5:23), dated 2/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwqLLzs4T9w>)

This video follows the previous one and shows the court's sentence being carried out on one of the accused men in the town of Azzan. It also includes interviews of people praising AAS and footage of a distribution center where DVDs (presumably of the confessions, verdict and execution), are being distributed.

NUMBER 6 (4:52), dated 3/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuQAJOoAJXU>)

This video shows the funeral procession and burial of one Abd al-Monaam al-Qahtani, killed by an airstrike.

NUMBER 7 (9:04), dated 3/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1AV-qyBmYk>)

The video consists of long interviews with locals who speak of the US and Yemeni government's threats to bomb Waqar (Jaar) and Zinjibar. They emphasize that there is security now and was chaos before, speaking positively of AAS.

NUMBER 8 (7:03), dated 3/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V2fZM9CwMs>)

The video begins with an aerial shot of Waqar (Jaar) and then shows interviews with townspeople who emphasize security and note that business is going great. Interviewees also express agreement with AAS's decree that shops be closed during prayer time.

NUMBER 9 (7:41), dated 3/12 (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s34zsDUGX_A)

The video begins with a shot of a checkpoint in Shaqra (Abyan province). It follows with interviews in which people speak of how AAS is an improvement over the government. The video paints an image of greater prosperity and less theft and corruption thanks to the incorruptible AAS.

NUMBER 10 (11:43), dated 3/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7NyC9Fl6A8>)

The video begins with technicians installing electricity in a village on the outskirts of Waqar (Jaar), with residents explaining that despite numerous requests the state had never provided electricity to them. The rest of the video shows work on the electric cables and climaxes by showing a ceiling fan and light bulb powered by the newly installed electricity.

NUMBER 11 (10:16), dated 3/12 (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ywvolND_wI)

The video shows captured government soldiers and a caption identifying Guardian correspondent Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, who filmed a show for PBS. The prisoners take turns pleading that the correspondent relay their request for the government to agree to a prisoner exchange demanded by AAS.

NUMBER 12 (15:36), dated 5/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDG7TBGdFIk>)

The video initially focuses on Awad al-Banajar (one might call him AAS's "shaykh"), an influential figure in the province of Hadhramawt, and his role in mediating the prisoner swap. The video includes footage of the families of the detained prisoners (from the previous video) and talks by members of the mediation delegation. It also includes footage showing AAS leaders Ibrahim al-Rubaysh (Arbaysh) and Mamoun Abdel Hamid Hatim.

NUMBER 13 (8:29), dated 5/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRrXKap6RM8>)

This video focuses on an aerial bombing in the city of Waqr (Jaar) and its aftermath.

NUMBER 14 (30:26), dated 5/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1YHfA50jPY>)

This long video begins with an AAS convoy transporting the prisoners from video number 12 and their subsequent release. Awad al-Banajar, seemingly the key figure in the negotiations for the release, gives a long speech, which is followed by the local AAS emir (Jalal al-Marqashi) speaking and interviews with family members of released soldiers.

NUMBER 15 (1:39), dated 7/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ-tB12azWY>)

This brief video shows the release of a French aid worker. The faces of those involved, with the exception of the French aid worker, are blurred out.

ADDITIONAL (9:05), dated 5/12 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4hARPXqQVg>)

This video shows AAS members destroying a shrine in a village in Abyan. The shrine's interior is destroyed and burned and the whole structure is subsequently leveled with a bulldozer. There are then shots of other shrines being destroyed. In some of them, local village youths join in.

ADDITIONAL (4:22), no date (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUWg0w6Dfys>)

This video shows AAS leader Jalal al-Marqashi visiting a group of prisoners and lecturing them against fighting AAS and the importance of applying Shari'a. He emphasizes that the United States and other forces are in essence occupying Yemen.

[1] Yemeni names and locations often have more than one commonly used transliteration; as a result, readers are likely to encounter spellings other than those used in this article (e.g. Ta'izz, Saada, Sana, and Houthi). In cases where more than one spelling is common, simplicity and personal preference have provided the criteria for selection. This also applies more broadly (e.g. Shari'a v. Sharia).

[2] The word "Karama" means dignity in Arabic and has been a key concept used by protesters throughout the region. The massacre occurred on what protesters called the "Friday of Dignity," when a massive protest march in the capital Sana'a was attacked by paramilitary thugs and fired on by rooftop snipers. More than 50 protesters were killed and over 100 were injured, in what was by far the largest single-day loss of life in Yemen's uprising until that point.

[3] The list included several important political leaders and diplomats. The list of military commanders that defected with Ali Muhsin can be found here: <http://bigthink.com/waq-al-waq/army-officers-breaking-ranks-in-yemen>.

[4] Their father, Abdullah al-Ahmar, was for many years Yemen's most influential tribal leader as the head of the Hashid tribal confederation and the speaker of Yemen's parliament.

[5] Al-Zindani became a US Treasury Department "Specially Designated Terrorist" in 2004 for his links to and support for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda (<http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/js1190.aspx>) and has long been a key spiritual leader in the Islah party.

[6] Salafism is, broadly speaking, a Sunni movement that aims to return to the fundamentals of Islam by emulating, as much as possible, the traditions and norms of early Islam. There is significant overlap with Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism, although the latter is a recent historical phenomenon.

[7] Zaydis split with the more widespread form of "Twelver" Shi'a Islam by recognizing Zayd ibn Ali as the fifth Imam. Like his grandfather Husayn (the Prophet Muhammad's grandson), Zayd was killed when attempting to revolt against the Damascus-based Ummayyads.

[8] For more on the origins of Zaydi revivalism, see: Shelagh Weir, "A Clash of Fundamentalisms: Wahhabism in Yemen," Middle East Report, 204, 1997. Also see: Bernard Haykel, "A Zaydi Revival?" Yemen Update 36, 1995.

[9] For more on the thought of Husayn al-Houthi, see: Abdullah Lux, "Yemen's Last Zaydi Imam: The Shabab al-Mu'min, the Malazim, and hizb Allah in the Thought of Husayn Badr al-Din al-Houthi," Contemporary Arab Affairs, Sept. 2009. For a good exposition of the social dynamics within contemporary Zaydism see: James Robin King, "Zayd? revival in a hostile republic: Competing identities, loyalties and visions of state in Republican Yemen," Arabica 59, 2012.

[10] See: Gregory Johnsen, "The Last Refuge: Yemen, al-Qaeda, and America's War in Arabia," New York: W.W. Norton, 2012, 148-160.

[11] For one typology of mobilized Islam in Yemen see: Laurent Bonnefoy, "Varieties of Islamism in Yemen: The Logic of Integration Under Pressure," MERIA Journal 3, no. 1, 2009, <http://www.gloria-center.org/meria/2009/03/bonnefoy.html>.

[12] "AQAP-central" in this case refers to the group's secretive "core leadership." For more on whom this group might include see: Gregory D. Johnsen, "A Profile of AQAP's Upper Echelon," CTC Sentinel, 7/12. Available at: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-profile-of-aqaps-upper-echelon>

[13] See: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/10/198659.htm>

[14] Scott Helfstein terms this rebranding or (as he puts it) redefinition of Islamism as an "adaptive radiation." See: Scott Helfstein, "Political Islam's Adaptive Radiation," The National Interest, 11/26/12, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/politicalislams-adaptive-radiation-7767?page=1> Helfstein calls for the United States to articulate a new, broad strategic approach to the region, given the

adaptations taking place.

[15] Two excellent books deal with this topic. For the history of contemporary jihadism in Saudi Arabia see Thomas Hegghammer, “Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and pan-islamism since 1979,” No. 1. IFRI, 2011. For the history of contemporary jihadism in Yemen see Johnsen, “The Last Refuge.”

[16] Some had also been released under rehabilitation programs carried out in both Yemen and Saudi Arabia. See Johnsen, “The Last Refuge,” 135-148.

[17] Al-‘Awfi would subsequently defect from the group, turning himself in to Saudi authorities.

[18] The group’s notoriety stems from its attempted attacks abroad. In late August 2009 they dispatched a suicide bomber to meet with then-Saudi counterterror chief (current Minister of Interior) Mohammed bin Nayef, under the pretense of turning himself in. Although the attack failed, it attested to a resourceful and creative organization. The group made headlines in Christmas 2009, when a Nigerian recruit attempted to blow himself up on a Detroit-bound airliner. In October 2010 they attempted to blow up UPS and FedEx airplanes with parcel bombs and claimed to have successfully done so in September 2010. For more on AQAP’s ambitions see for instance Bruce Reidel, “AQAP’s ‘Great Expectations’ for the Future,” CTC Sentinel, 8/11. Available at: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/aqap's-'great-expectations'-for-the-future>

[19] For details see: Christopher Boucek, “The Evolving Terrorist Threat in Yemen,” CTC Sentinel, 9/10. Available at: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-evolving-terrorist-threat-in-yemen>

[20] Ali Muhsin had led the military campaign against the Huthis in the first decade of the 2000s. During this time, Islah tribal militias had also clashed with the Huthis in the provinces of al-Jawf and Amran.

[21] For an overview of Huthi activities see: Lucas Winter, “Yemen’s Huthi Movement in the Wake of the Arab Spring,” CTC Sentinel, 8/12, see: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/yemens-huthi-movement-in-the-wake-of-the-arab-spring>.

[22] For an excellent account of these tribal dynamics see: Marieke Brandt, “Tribal politics during the Huthi Conflict,” Journal of Arabian Studies (forthcoming).

[23] In January 2012, a Huthi-backed political party (Hizb al-Umma) was formed.

[24] The site is no longer active.

[25] See for instance Abd al-Malik al-Huthi’s Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100002196544875&fref=ts>. See also the Ansar Allah Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ansaruallah.net> or their Twitter account:
<https://twitter.com/ansaruallah>.

[26] See for instance the channel’s Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Almasirah> Live feed available from the channels’ website: <http://www.almasirah.tv/>

[27] A *sayyid* is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through his grandsons Hassan and Husayn. In traditional Yemeni society, they enjoy a privileged status. Only they could be selected as imams.

[28] Saudi Arabia is often the target of Huthi wrath as well. The roots of Husayn al-Huthi's anti-American rhetoric are varied although predictable, inspired by the Iranian Revolution's "Death to America" slogan, as well as by images coming from Palestine and Afghanistan in 2002 and Iraq subsequently. Although much of Yemen's Salafism in Saada province was of the quietist (apolitical) variety, Huthis share their anti-American rhetoric with the Salafi-jihadism. Thus, while al-Huthi's message called for a return to both Yemeni and Islamic tradition, it attributed much of what ails the country and Muslims as a whole to the policies of Israel and the United States.

[29] The Huthi slogan, which is chanted and also written on the group's banners, is: "Allahu Akbar! Death to America! Death to Israel! Woe to the Jews! Victory to Islam!" The duty of chanting the slogan became an identity marker for Huthi followers. The banner consists of this message written in red and green lettering.

[30] See: Michael Scott Doran, "The Heirs of Nasser," Foreign Affairs, May/June 2011.

[31] For disambiguation, see: Aaron Zelin, "Know Your Ansar al-Sharia," Foreign Policy, 9/21/12, Available at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/21/know_your_ansar_al_sharia.

[32] The most famous case involves Yemeni journalist Abdulelah al-Shaya, who was able to interview the group's leadership and was later imprisoned on charges of supporting the group.

[33] Al-Qaeda's official production company is "Al-Sahab."

[34] Specific internet forums such as the "Shumukh al-Islam."

[35] See: "From Azzan to Zinjibar, Half a Month with Ansar al-Shari'a," Mareb Press, 3/12/11 (in Arabic). Available at: http://marebpress.net/news_details.php?lng=arabic&sid=38305 Also see: Abdul Razzaq al-Jaml, "Interview with Ansar al-Shari'a Leader in Abyan, Jalal Baleedi al-Murqashi," Yemen Times, 5/17/12 (originally published in al-Quds al-Arabi). Available at: <http://www.yementimes.com/en/1573/interview/869/Interview-with-Ansar-Al-Sharia-Leader-in-Abyan-Jalal--Baleedi-Al-Murqashi.htm>. Video from the interview is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoIW6Xgf4nQ> (in Arabic).

[36] Casey Coombs, "Land of the Black Flag," Foreign Policy, 3/9/12. Available at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/03/09/land_of_the_black_flag Also see Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "Al-Qaida's wretched utopia and the battle for hearts and minds," The Guardian, 4/30/12. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/apr/30/alqaida-yemen-jihadis-sharia-law>. This article also resulted in a PBS Frontline documentary: <http://video.pbs.org/video/2240325626> A crew from France 24 News Channel (Arabic version) also made a brief visit to the area under Ansar al-Shari'a control: <http://www.france24.com/ar/20120416-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A3%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B9%D8%A9->

%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%83-%D8%A5%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9.

[37] According to one account: “Between November 2011 and June 2012, Ansar al-Shari’s media outlet, the Madad News Agency, produced 23 newsletters entitled Taqrir Ikhbari (News Report), along with 15 official videos entitled Ayn ala al-hadath (Eyes on the Event) and a number of interviews and audio messages. AQAP Amir Nasir al-Wuhayshi and AQAP’s military commander, Qasim al-Raymi, have frequently appeared in the newsletters, while a March video entitled ‘Ansar al-Shari’a in Yemen, part of a campaign to spread our Shari’a together,’ included messages from the two AQAP leaders and the late U.S.-born AQAP cleric Anwar al-Awlaki.” See Ludovico Carlino, “Are Yemen’s Ansar al-Shari’a and AQAP One and the Same?” The Jamestown Foundation, Terrorism Monitor Volume, 7/5/12. Available at: http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39551

[38] Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/%D9%88%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9/363241207060412>. Twitter account: https://twitter.com/W_mdd

[39] See Appendix.

[40] For an overview on the phenomenon see Aaron Zelin, “Know Your Ansar al-Sharia,” Foreign Policy, 9/21/12. Available at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/21/know_your_ansar_al_sharia (accessed 1/10/13).

[41] See “Al-Qaeda commander and leader in Abyan Jalal al-Marqashi speaks of al-Qaeda’s new strategy,” al-Wasat, 1/25/12. Available at: http://alwasat-ye.net/index.php?ac=3&no=32303&d_f=21&t=5&lang_in= In addition to their strongholds, the Huthis are believed to have presence in major cities, as well as Mareb Province. Their presence in the provinces of former Southern Yemen is unknown. The main evidence backing the claim that the Huthis have infiltrated the security apparatus is the video aired on al-Masirah of an American military aircraft (see footnote 43).

[42] It should be emphasized that Zaydism is a unique branch of Shi'a Islam, different than the more prevalent form followed in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon among others. Zaydism is in many ways doctrinally close to Sunnism, although as mentioned before the Huthis have “Salafized” it to some degree.

[43] The Shi'a are pejoratively called “Rawafidh.”

[44] The foundations of Yemeni Zaydism were laid down by Imam al-Hadi ila al-Haq, who ruled over parts of Yemen’s north as the first Zaydi Imam at the turn of the 10th century. Although his brand of “Hadawi” Zaydism was moderated over the subsequent thousand years, the Huthis have in many ways returned to his basic teachings.

[45] On the concerns of the Zaydi establishment, see: James Robin King, "Zaydis in a Post-Zaydi Yemen: 'Ulama Reactions to Zaydism's Marginalization in the Republic of Yemen." Shi'a Affairs Journal

1, 2009.

[46] See for instance: “Houthi leader condemns US drone attack in northern Yemen,” available at: <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/30/269595/yemeni-leader-condemns-us-drone-attack/> (accessed 1/10/13).

[47] Ansar al-Shari'a, it should be emphasized, is only one part of AQAP's multi-pronged Yemen strategy, which also includes acts of sabotage and destabilization, including the targeting of government facilities and figures, as well as foreign interests.

[48] For more on this see: “Yemen: Enduring Conflicts, Threatened Transition,” Crisis Group Middle East Report N°125, 3 July 2012. Available at:

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iran%20Gulf/Yemen/125-yemen-enduring-conflicts-threatened-transition.pdf>

[49] See: Sarah Phillips and Roger Shanahan, “Al-Qa’ida, Tribes and Instability in Yemen,” Lowy Institute Analysis, November 2009. Available at:

http://lowyinstitute.cachefly.net/files/pubfiles/Phillips_and_Shanahan%252C_Al-Qa%2527ida%252C_tribes_and_instability_in_Yemen_web.pdf

[50] See Johnsen, “The Last Refuge.”

[51] See Casey Coombs, “Hot Issue — The Ansar al-Shari'a Insurgency in Southern Yemen: The View from the Ground,” The Jamestown Foundation. Available at:

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=39348.

[52] Although Ali Abdullah Saleh kept the Yemeni state together for many years, he did so in a uniquely decentralized fashion that often entailed “acting like a state.” See Lisa Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power and Performance in Yemen* (The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[53] Also note this video, which is a general introduction to AQAP's ideology as implemented through AAS: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3rYi64J6bU>. Also note this battlefield video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHLYhLFXguE>.

About the Author



Lucas Winter

Lucas Winter is an analyst on the Middle East for the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, KS. He has an M.A. in International Relations from Johns Hopkins SAIS and was an Arabic Language Flagship Fellow in Damascus, Syria in 2006-2007. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

Available online at : <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-ansar-of-yemen-the-huthis-and-al-qaeda>

Links:

- {1} <http://smallwarsjournal.com/author/lucas-winter>
- {2} <http://ansaruallah.net/>
- {3} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtrYxiG3tp0>
- {4} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2kL9me-qkA>
- {5} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fu2Ntj42cJU>
- {6} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ha5o19u5eY>
- {7} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwqLLzs4T9w>
- {8} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuQAJOoAJXU>
- {9} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1AV-qyBmYk>
- {10} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V2fZM9CwMs>
- {11} http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s34zsDUGX_A
- {12} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7NyC9Fl6A8>
- {13} http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ywvolND_wI
- {14} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDG7TBGdFIk>
- {15} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRrXKap6RM8>
- {16} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1YHfA50jPY>
- {17} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ-tB12azWY>
- {18} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4hARPXqQVg>
- {19} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUWg0w6Dfys>
- {20} <http://bigthink.com/waq-al-waq/army-officers-breaking-ranks-in-yemen>
- {21} <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/js1190.aspx>
- {22} <http://www.gloria-center.org/meria/2009/03/bonnefoy.html>
- {23} <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-profile-of-aqaps-upper-echelon>
- {24} <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/10/198659.htm>
- {25} <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/politicalislamsadaptiveradiation-7767?page=1>
- {26} <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/aqap's-great-expectations-for-the-future>
- {27} <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-evolving-terrorist-threat-in-yemen>
- {28} <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/yemens-huthi-movement-in-the-wake-of-the-arab-spring>
- {29} <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100002196544875&fref=ts>
- {30} <https://www.facebook.com/ansaruallah.net>
- {31} <https://twitter.com/ansaruallah>
- {32} <https://www.facebook.com/Almasirah>
- {33} <http://www.almasirah.tv/>
- {34} http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/21/know_your_ansar_al_sharia
- {35} http://marebpress.net/news_details.php?lng=arabic&sid=38305
- {36} <http://www.yementimes.com/en/1573/interview/869/Interview-with-Ansar-Al-Sharia-Leader-in-Abyan-Jalal-Baleedi-Al-Murqashi.htm>
- {37} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoIW6Xgf4nQ>
- {38} http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/03/09/land_of_the_black_flag
- {39} <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/apr/30/alqaida-yemen-jihadis-sharia-law>
- {40} <http://video.pbs.org/video/2240325626>
- {41} <http://www.france24.com/ar/20120416-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A9->

%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A3%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%B1-
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B9%D8%25
{42} http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39551
{43} <https://www.facebook.com/pages/%D9%88%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%AF->
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9/363241207060412
{44} https://twitter.com/W_mdd
{45} http://alwasat-ye.net/index.php?ac=3&no=32303&d_f=21&t=5&lang_in
{46} <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/10/30/269595/yemeni-leader-condemns-us-drone-attack/>
{47}
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iran%20Gulf/Yemen/125-yemen-enduring-conflicts-threatened-transition.pdf>
{48} http://lowyinstitute.cachefly.net/files/pubfiles/Phillips_and_Shanahan%252C_Al-Qa%2527ida%252C_tribes_and_instability_in_Yemen_web.pdf
{49} http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39348
{50} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3rYi64J6bU>
{51} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHLYhLFXguE>
{52} <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/keep-calm-and-carry-on-a-plan-for-yemen>
{53} <http://smallwarsjournal.com/comment/reply/14049#comment-form>

Copyright © 2013, Small Wars Foundation.



Select uses allowed by Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 3.0 license per our [Terms of Use](#).

Please help us support the [Small Wars Community](#).